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AFRICOM: A Unique Opportunity to Reshape Civil/Military Relationships

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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ABSTRACT

AFRICOM: A Unique Opportunity to Reshape Civil/Military Relationships

The concept of operations for the evolving U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) primarily focuses on developing security through the non-military elements of U.S. national power. Accordingly, interagency civilian participation is being planned into the new organization. In this first interagency command, senior U.S. officials involved in standing up the new command have announced AFRICOM's deputy commander position will be filled by a senior official from the U.S. Department of State. Unfortunately, in limiting the senior civilian leadership to deputy status, the United States is not going far enough in its efforts to reorganize its combatant command leadership structure in order to deal best with its assumed role in Africa. Lessons applied from other interagency models suggest alternative leadership roles among civilian and military officers can be effective. Based upon AFRICOM's mission set, its Director should be a senior U.S. State Department civilian, with a 4-star military officer serving as the Deputy Director. Significant changes to existing law are required to implement the organizational and budgetary changes required for change of this magnitude to occur.

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INTRODUCTION

Since September 2001, U.S. interest in the countries of Africa has steadily and publicly increased. Whether that interest stemmed from concerns about natural resources, possible terrorist safe-havens, growing Chinese influence, or even a sense of altruism for its diverse people, the fact remains that the United States is increasingly concerned about the future of Africa.

On 6 February 2007, President Bush announced his decision to stand up a separate U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). This new organization would “enhance [U.S.] efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote [U.S. and African] common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa.”¹ Given the nature of the challenges in Africa, the concept of operations for AFRICOM primarily focuses on developing security through the non-military elements of U.S. national power and, therefore, necessitates inclusion of other U.S. agencies and departments in both the planning and the operation of this command.² Inclusion is not relegated to staff positions, but leadership roles as well: the Department of Defense stated that it plans to fill AFRICOM’s deputy commander position with a senior official from the U.S. State Department.³

U.S. European Command (EUCOM) has been charged with standing up the new command by September 2008. General Craddock, commander of EUCOM, explained that the focus of AFRICOM is different than a traditional unified command and required a novel interagency approach from its inception. Success in this “pioneer” effort could be beneficial in “re-crafting the [other] combatant commands.”⁴

While the emphasis may be non-military, there exists concern that the military aspect may easily become the focus.⁵ When facing new challenges, the tendency is to think within or take action in accordance with one's previous comfort zone. Military officers are trained in the art and science of war; they are not trained to be diplomats, though combatant commanders have increasingly been asked to take greater responsibility in this regard.⁶ Having a senior officer from the State Department, skilled in diplomacy and experienced in working with non-DoD agencies, in a key leadership role like that proposed is critical to sending the right signals to the various governments on this important continent and making certain U.S. efforts in Africa do not become primarily military in nature.⁷

However, this paper proposes that in limiting the senior civilian leadership to deputy status, the United States is not going far enough in its efforts to reorganize its combatant command leadership structure in order to deal best with its assumed role in Africa. In standing up a new combatant command within Africa, the United States has a unique opportunity to reshape its civilian/military relationships at both the operational and theater-strategic levels. As AFRICOM stands up, now is the time to think well about how best to organize the command for success. It is important to accept the challenges of establishing a new interagency command and its leadership structure now, because as the command matures and practices become doctrine, any necessary changes will be more difficult to effect.

This paper will explore recent literature regarding the need for interagency organizations in best executing U.S. government policy, models of past and current interagency organizations, and interagency challenges experienced. It will then recommend a way forward unique to AFRICOM.

The recommendations envisioned are outside the norms set forth in U.S. Code, Titles 10 and 22, and go beyond the changes set forth in the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act. It is important to recognize that a thorough legal review of relevant U.S. Code and subsequent revision of pertinent laws would be required to allow necessary changes to occur. Further, the recommendations may overlap congressional committee ‘jurisdiction’ and would require agreement in Congress regarding how to address crucial alterations to the committee processes.⁸ Finally, the paper will briefly address the issue of budget, because no real organizational change can be effected without the appropriate budgetary changes, though it is beyond the scope of this paper to address those in detail. Changes will necessitate dynamic involvement of Congress and the affected agencies to achieve a balance that meets mission needs for AFRICOM, yet does not adversely impede the effectiveness of existing agencies.

INTERAGENCY APPROACH

The Need for Interagency Organizations

The nature of the dangers facing the United States today is vastly different than in years past. Since September 11, 2001, Americans have come to realize that the near-term threat is no longer from nation states with communist or fascist ideologies. Rather, it is from individuals using terrorism as their primary means to achieve their political, religious and/or ideological ends. These terrorists are elusive, seek to exploit U.S. weaknesses and avoid its strengths, and can operate quickly due to flat organizational structures and flexible doctrine.⁹ Extremist religious groups, like Al Qaeda and associated movements, denounce the West in general and the United States in particular as the root of all that ails them. This message resonates with those who embrace these organizations. While the affluent, educated, upper-

middle classes serve as the typical leaders, disaffected, unemployed youth make up the typical foot soldiers. To deal with these terrorists, the United States has often employed the military element of national power as its primary tool in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. The military has diligently pursued its mission to kill or capture the terrorists, with some degree of success, though the problem as a whole has not been resolved.

The U.S. organizational structures that are being asked to address the current threats were not designed for employment against non-state actors. More specifically, they were adapted over time to successfully counter a Cold War enemy who no longer exists. Throughout the Cold War, U.S. government agency roles at the strategic-level were well known and agreed upon.¹⁰ The Department of Defense had established the Unified Command Plan, which divided the world into geographical commands, to logically distribute U.S. forces and senior military leader command responsibilities to counter Soviet influence. The other agencies divided the world to best match their own organizational infrastructure, operations and procedures. There was really very little need to integrate planning among agencies or to interact at the operational level.¹¹ The United States, through an unprecedented arms race, grew to equate military dominance with the power to compel one's enemy to act or not act.¹² The Department of State had an important role, but it was not the dominant U.S. government agency.

Policy and influence are not tangible, and progress is typically incremental. Tanks, ships and aircraft are the visible symbols of national power that Congress can rightly and visibly claim credit in providing. Equipment and troops can produce immediate results; ideas, discussion and consensus take time. It is not difficult to see why funds increased to the

Department of Defense over the years, while the Department of State budget continued to shrink.

The Departments of State and Defense have evolved into two separate and distinct cultures. The Department of State works to achieve “subtle progress,” and its perspective is tied to broad, overarching concepts.¹³ The Department of Defense is tied to doctrine and planning. It adheres to a rigid hierarchy and does what it can when assigned any mission or task.¹⁴ Due to the large amounts of resources afforded the Department of Defense throughout the Cold War, it has been better able to accommodate the various tasks that have been asked of it. As the Department’s budget grew and its taskings expanded, other departments that were less-well-funded found they were no longer provided the resources needed to carry out all of their required responsibilities to the degree necessary. In the downward funding and capability spiral of recent eras, where other agencies were unable to carry out their tasks, the military has often been charged to fill the void.

Recognition of this dilemma is shared by the various agencies. In remarks made at Georgetown University, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that the military has “borne a disproportionate share of the burden of post conflict responsibilities” due to a lack of capability in the Department of State.¹⁵ Because of limited resources and declining capacity among other governmental departments, the military is asked to get the job done, even though there may be more appropriate agencies to do the job.¹⁶ Such circumstances are not new to the military. In its 2001 Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces*, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff addresses the disparity among the departments and attempts to inform military personnel of the capabilities other organizations may bring to the

missions the military has been assigned. It correctly states that the “solution to a problem will not normally reside within the capability of just one agency.”¹⁷

Unity of effort has long been the military’s guiding principle in dealing with complex foreign missions that require the talents and expertise resident in more than one agency -- at least in doctrine, if not practice. Critical to unity of effort is the coordination and planning that must take place among organizations involved.¹⁸ Despite federal agency and departmental involvement in a number of stability operations over the last ten to fifteen years, the “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols Report” found that the United States continues to approach its requisite coordination and planning in an ad hoc and often overly complex manner.¹⁹ The report criticizes this haphazard approach as the cause of “poor interagency planning, slow response time, insufficient resources, and little unity of effort among agencies, as well as infighting and competition among organizations in the field.”²⁰

This discontinuity persists because no authoritative interagency doctrine or policy exists to guide effectively and to coordinate operations among multiple organizations.²¹ Presidential Decision Directive 56, signed in 1997, came close to providing this level of direction, but it was rescinded and the concepts behind it were captured in what is now called the *Interagency Management of Complex Crisis Operations Handbook*. This National Defense University publication reiterates that success in complex operations requires multiple agencies to simultaneously address all elements of national power in each situation, “to include diplomatic, political, military, humanitarian, economic, and social.”²²

Interagency Organizational Models

Increasingly, the military has attempted to incorporate other agencies’ needs into its planning and operations with varying degrees of success. In 2001, the Hart-Rudman

Commission reported that there remain gaps in planning with “no systematic foreign policy input into military planning.”²³ This is unfortunate, considering the United States has coordinated interagency efforts successfully in various operations and planning efforts over the last several decades. The following examples illustrate the variety of efforts developed and used, but the collection is not exhaustive.

The Civil Operations and Revolutionary (or Rural) Development Support (CORDS) program was developed in 1967, during the Vietnam War, to coordinate and integrate the programs of the various U.S. government agencies in order to achieve the U.S. government’s pacification goals.²⁴ Major participants included the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Information Service and the Department of State. Interestingly, a civilian with 3-star-military-equivalent rank, Robert Komer, was tasked to run the CORDS organization, with full involvement by the Ambassador and his country team. Komer had CIA experience and had served on the National Security Council staff before assignment to the CORDS program. Supervisors led mixed groups of civilians and military and performed all the functions typical of a supervisor, irrespective of the community from which the subordinate came. Civilians were integrated so well that they were given authority over military funding and equipment.²⁵ The ultimate objective of the CORDS program was to serve the needs of the local populace, thereby securing assistance in the form of intelligence against insurgents.²⁶ Where CORDS was employed against the insurgents in Vietnam, it was highly successful.

Country teams, as previously mentioned, were fully involved in the successful CORDS program. By its nature, an embassy country team is a permanent interagency organization, typically enjoying extensive local knowledge and long-term relationships with

host nation personnel.²⁷ It is headed by the Chief of Mission and is populated by the senior representative from each department, agency or organization. The Chief of Mission is the senior U.S. executive, responsible for all U.S. personnel in the host country, except those under the authority of a combatant commander. Typically an Ambassador, the Chief of Mission is also responsible directly to the President and oversees U.S. foreign policy and program implementation in the host country. By design, the focus is on each country individually. When Department of State resources are insufficient, military commanders may be tasked to represent the country team in foreign policy matters.²⁸ Combatant commanders are not specifically trained in foreign policy, but do have experience employing each of the various elements of national power, primarily through military efforts under the auspices of their respective Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCP).²⁹

Civil Military Operations Centers (CMOCs) were first established in Somalia in 1992 and were eventually codified in Joint Publication 3-08, *Interagency Cooperation During Joint Operations*, as well as other joint doctrinal publications.³⁰ A CMOC is implemented to coordinate information sharing and activities among U.S. and multinational military forces, other participating government agencies and non-government organizations. It is not designed to effect command and control and has no set structure or required participants.³¹ The focus is mostly on tactical-level coordination between and among host nation, government civilian, military, intergovernmental organizations (IGO) and non-governmental organizations (NGO). While potentially a powerful coordination tool, many organizations participate only if it is in their best interest to do so.³² Despite the challenges this can create, CMOCs have often worked exceedingly well in effecting routine coordination between humanitarian organizations and the military.³³

Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South) is often praised as the **model** of interagency success. JIATF-South evolved throughout the 1990s (formally becoming JIATF-South in 2003) to focus on the dynamic counterdrug mission. Like CORDS, personnel from various agencies are fully integrated and serve in key leadership roles. The Director is a Rear Admiral from the U.S. Coast Guard, while the current Vice Director worked for a number of years with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection.³⁴ Multiple agencies comprise the task force, along with participants from numerous other nations. These multiple entities all share a common mission and work toward common goals. To facilitate this unity of effort, the task force took pains to recognize and work toward common, relevant measures of success.³⁵ Key to its effective counterdrug operations has been its ability to fuse intelligence and operations, from collecting and processing information, to sharing and disseminating it with those who will execute its assigned missions.

A Joint Interagency Coordinating Group (JIACG) was formed by U.S. Central Command as an “interagency coordination cell” in 2001 with the “rare authority” to coordinate directly with and among participating agencies.³⁶ The concept was first employed in the Joint Interagency Task Force-Counterterrorism (JIATF-CT) that deployed to Afghanistan. It included numerous U.S. government agencies, eventually adding Customs Service, Treasury and law enforcement agencies to the long list of participating organizations. JIACG members have been able to make inputs to operational-level plans and coordinate and resolve potential problems while smoothing the way within their respective parent organizations for additional future requirements.³⁷ JIACGs bring the combatant commander an “interagency perspective” with regard to the use of the various elements of

national power.³⁸ They also provide the combatant commander and staff with a high degree of situational awareness over both plans and operations being conducted by the various government agencies operating in the theater and vice versa, ultimately helping to coordinate and deconflict activities.³⁹ This group was highly successful in integrating into JIATF-CT and providing planning input. The JIACG concept has since evolved, with U.S. Joint Forces Command working on a plan to add an interagency element to each of the various combatant commander staffs.⁴⁰

The Joint Interagency Intergovernmental Multinational (JIIM) task force was created in Iraq. In 2003, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) began to adapt a variation of the JIATF concept into something more useful for their situational needs. Specifically, they built upon the JIATF model to include all the forces at their disposal, coordinating operations through their JIIM task force.⁴¹ This organization proved to be highly effective in its target deconfliction and intelligence collection efforts.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are another innovative tactical-level approach to bring security and support to assigned areas to enable stability. U.S. PRTs bring together members from the military, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of State to work closely with local governments toward common goals.⁴² PRT operations fall under three general areas: efforts to pursue security sector reform, build local governance, and/or execute reconstruction and development; however, they are given sufficient latitude to tailor strategies to their unique situations and environment.⁴³ It is hard to judge the success of the PRT model at this early stage, particularly in Iraq, though their success in Afghanistan has been very good.

As one can plainly see from this brief review, there is no single model of interagency organization. The United States has evolved and modified its interagency organizations to better integrate operations and planning with multiple agencies. While these organizational adaptations are constantly improving, it is important to consider some of the problems or difficulties experienced.

Interagency Challenges

Many of the interagency organizational models listed worked to achieve unity of effort, but found it difficult to attain. In some cases, the lack of directive authority proved sufficient to prevent progress. In other cases, organizations relied upon voluntary cooperation of needed agencies to address the application of pertinent elements of national power.

In any interagency, cooperative effort, the lead-agency model is often charged with providing coordination to obtain unity of effort.⁴⁴ The lead-agency model gives the lead for coordination to the agency best equipped to address the issue or the agency with the preponderance of resources. This model may not work well in achieving unity of effort, however, if agencies resist taking direction from what they perceive is a bureaucratic equal.⁴⁵ Another alternative is the National Security Council (NSC)-centric approach, in which the President or National Security Advisor appoints a representative to lead the organization.⁴⁶ The NSC-centric approach may be problematic if the appointed representative lacks detailed knowledge of the evolving situation, possesses insufficient cultural awareness pertaining to participating agencies, or is perceived to lack the necessary Presidential support to compel cooperation.

Another potential solution to United States' inability to achieve unity of effort among agencies is to mandate unity of command. The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act did just that for the military who was experiencing a similar discontinuity between the Joint Staff and the service branches.⁴⁷ Like military forces deployed to a regional combatant commander's area of responsibility, operational and tactical control of those assigned agency personnel would transfer from the parent organization to the combatant commander, and unity of command would ensure unity of effort. Recently, senior U.S. leadership began looking at appointing a single U.S. official to take charge of all agencies' operations in Iraq. For true unity of command, that leader would require full authority over all U.S. resources and personnel in Iraq.⁴⁸ The nature of the conflict, the organization and mission of the existing command, the timing, and the current political environment in the United States nevertheless make it unlikely this idea will be implemented in Iraq.

Despite all these cooperative interagency organizational efforts, parent organizations still develop their own plans and may unintentionally duplicate or even counter other agency efforts. Combatant commanders operate under the Unified Command Plan to develop a TSCP for their assigned regions. The Department of State has each Chief of Mission develop a country-specific Mission Performance Plan. That plan is rolled into a regional or functional Bureau Performance Plan. Recently, the Department of State and USAID have produced a Joint Performance Plan (JPP). The goal is for the TSCP, the JPP, and the Department of State's country and regional plans to build upon one another, but that is not always the case. No single review or universal planning process exists across the U.S. government and various agency planning cycles, where they exist, may not mesh sufficiently to produce the desired level of integration.

As discussed in the introduction, there is a fear among many U.S. government agencies that a military-led interagency organization may tend to focus all too easily on a military solution to a given issue. Similarly, many NGOs and IGOs view the military as overly rigid and tend to believe that the military tries to dominate their activities. When discussing perceptions of AFRICOM with a senior officer from an African nation attending the Naval War College, he indicated discomfort with a military-led U.S. command in Africa. Referring to a colonial past, he indicated a clear preference for a low-key civilian-led presence designed to assist and cooperate with Africans.

Central to all of these issues is the question of “who should be in charge?” From reviewing the previous models, one can see the variety of attempts made to address that issue. CORDS used a civilian appointed under an NSC-centric approach. The country team is primarily a Department of State organization led by the Chief of Mission. The CMOC is a coordinating tool for the military and humanitarian assistance organizations. It is provided by the military, but to say one is in charge implies too much. JIATF-South embraces the lead-agency approach, in that the leader is selected from the agency with most experience with the mission and resources employed. That agency, by design, also has extensive experience working with the various other participating agencies in many of its mission sets. The JIACG is intended to be a coordinating group that makes itself available to the combatant commander and works under the commander’s charge. JIIM was also a coordinating body, though the military was in charge of it in the example described here. Finally, PRTs are led by military in Afghanistan and senior civilian Foreign Service officers in Iraq.⁴⁹

Both civilians and military officers have effectively led interagency organizations. Assuming both have comparable abilities and professional skills to lead, one must base the decision of who should be in charge on other criteria. An approach similar to lead-agency, where leadership is provided from the agency whose skill sets best address a problem or who provides the bulk of the resources is one option. Another suggests that lead should depend upon which of three mission sets has priority at the time: governance, security, or essential services.⁵⁰

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the President's stated goal to bring peace and security to the people of Africa through development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth, it is obvious that the solutions should not come primarily from the military element of national power. The nation's leaders have recognized the future strategic importance of Africa, and they have further recognized that Africa's security needs are unique and will require an interagency approach to successfully implement foreign policy. Standing up a separate regional command for Africa will enable a more effective regional focus, gradually building the necessary regional expertise and understanding.

AFRICOM hopefully will be the first truly *interagency* command, as opposed to a *combatant* command. Building upon past models of success, both civilians and military officer will be well integrated into the command. The current concept is to make the AFRICOM commander a 4-star military officer, with the deputy being a senior state department civilian. Given the interagency mission and the focus in this region, however, those roles should be reversed in this command. The leader of this command should come from the organization best suited to direct the efforts of multiple agencies in non-military

mission sets. Therefore, the Director of this new Interagency Command should be a career senior Foreign Service officer from the Department of State, having experience in the region. This sends the more accurate perception to the African people that the United States is there to focus on long-term development, health, education and so forth. A military deputy should be required to implement the programs set forth for the Department of Defense, to include education and training, support to regional security programs and military exercises, as well as to develop future contingency plans and to coordinate various requests from regional African partners for needed resources like airlift.

In an interagency command like that proposed for AFRICOM, it would no longer be appropriate for oversight of the command to come from either the Secretary of State or Defense, since turf battles would inevitably ensue and would be detrimental to the overall functionality of this interagency command. Instead, direction and control should be provided by the NSC level, specifically from the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, more commonly referred to as the National Security Advisor. This office must be granted the status of first among equals over the other cabinet offices of the NSC in order to ensure sufficient authority to exercise control over personnel assigned. Personnel would be assigned from the organizations under the Secretary of State and Defense, much like the military services provide forces to the combatant commander.⁵¹ The military Deputy Director would retain command authority for assigned military personnel. Contingency operations in AFRICOM would fall under the purview of the military Deputy Director, as they do for the typical combatant commander; however, operations must be coordinated with the Director to ensure a unified U.S. government effort.

The Director must have authority over all regional foreign policy matters. U.S. Ambassadors should retain authority over “bi-lateral matters and remain the president’s representative to their respective countries,”⁵² though Ambassadors would need to remain cognizant of the effects their decisions might have on the overall regional effort. The Director must ensure that Ambassadors are fully informed regarding any decisions that will impact their efforts.

In standing up AFRICOM, budget execution authority and consensus over spending decisions will prove difficult; however, the ability to work through the budgetary issues is critical to the success of the developing interagency command concept. Therefore, while still complying with Title 10, U.S. Code responsibilities of the military services, budget execution authority over funds intended to be spent in the region on various programs, regardless of owning agency, would need to be coordinated through the AFRICOM Director. The Director would need to ensure elimination of waste and duplication of effort in executing funds, while adhering to the prescribed regional focus. Ultimately, all strategic and operational plans and budgets developed for the region would need to be consolidated under the interagency command, with approval authority for submissions resting with the Director. Congressional legislation action would be necessary to allow for these fundamental budgetary and organizational changes.

Lt Col Chris Naler, in a recent *Joint Force Quarterly* article, proposes a detailed headquarters and staff concept for this type of command.⁵³ His structure could apply very well to AFRICOM, with a slight alteration to accommodate the leadership changes outlined above. In his model, Lt Col Naler also proposes an interagency coordination group, the JIACG, to facilitate planning and operations among services and agencies. A JIACG,

however, would be redundant with the structure proposed here for AFRICOM. An operational-level planning cell, which invites participation from IGOs and NGOs, would be beneficial in establishing working relationships as well as determining broad conceptual guidance for future civil/military operations.

Finally, to populate the command effectively, one has to consider how best to prepare its personnel. Numerous ideas abound, such as attendance at a National Security University and cross-agency rotations at the mid-career level. Tying promotion to service in an interagency billet will remain the most effective tool for encouraging personnel to seek interagency experience, similar to how the Goldwater-Nichols Act drove many military officers to seek joint assignment experience.

Significant changes to existing law are required to implement the changes as outlined in this paper. Congress will need to approve and legislate some of the required changes and make them permanent. U.S. leaders must recognize that these suggested changes will be far outside the comfort zone of those within the affected institutions and that resistance will be natural. Accommodation will likely occur slowly; after all, it took nearly twenty years to see true jointness from the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act. The United States must be persistent in this endeavor because only true interagency cooperation can achieve the synergy that coping successfully with today's dynamic environment demands.

NOTES

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⁶ Derek S. Reveron, ed., *America's Viceroy: The Military and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 14.

⁷ *Creation of a U.S. Africa Command*, 110th Cong., 1st sess, *Congressional Record*, 19 of 46, daily ed. (10 January 2007): S352-354, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?r110:19:/temp/~r110jDoi4U::> (accessed 25 March 2007).

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